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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 000339

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA AND AF/SPG

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TAGS: PREL PGOV EAID SU EG

SUBJECT: DARFUR LEADER MINNI MINAWI'S VISIT TO CAIRO

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: We met with Minni Minawi, SLA leader and Chairman of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority on February 19, and his foreign affairs advisor on February 12. During his three-day visit to Cairo, Minawi met with President Mubarak, EGIS Chief Soliman, Field Marshall Tantawi, and FM Aboul Gheit. Minawi told us that he discussed Egypt's role in helping to resolve the situation in Darfur and possible Egyptian humanitarian assistance. Minawi failed to meet with Arab League (AL) SYG Moussa, despite being invited to Cairo by the AL. Minawi told us that the ongoing Doha talks did not represent a comprehensive solution to the problem and Qatar was "buying off" Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) officials. He told us that Doha undermines the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), which he signed in May 2006, because Qatar did not accept the DPA as the basis for the talks. He stated that the ICC was part of the legal solution to the Darfur crisis and the international community should support it. Minawi plans to open a Cairo office that will coordinate with Egyptian officials on policies toward Darfur and Sudan, and support the local Darfur refugee community.
End Summary.

Minawi's Trip to Cairo

¶2. (C) Minawi told EconPol Mincouns that in his meetings with GOE officials, he discussed Egypt's role in helping to resolve the conflict in Darfur and he said that Egypt was ready to assist. He said that Egypt needs to play a role in bringing all factions to the table. Minawi stated that Egypt was also involved in the humanitarian project work in Darfur, such as digging water wells. Minawi did not meet with AL SYG Moussa as planned. Abdo Hashim Ali, Foreign Affairs Advisor to Minawi, told poloff on February 12 that Minawi had been invited to Cairo by both the Government of Egypt (GOE) and the Arab League (AL). Minawi told us AL SYG Moussa had been "busy" and could not see him. Minawi mentioned that the AL lost credibility when they held an Arab Humanitarian Conference for Darfur in 2006, raised USD 250 million, and he never received any funds for Darfur.

¶3. (C) Ali was careful to point out that Minawi came to Cairo not as a GOS official, but as the head of the Transitional Darfur Government. Ali said that SLA/Minawi wants to see if the GOE has a different vision for Darfur than Qatar. He also was interested to see if Egypt could play a similar humanitarian role for Darfur as it is playing for Gaza. Ali told us that the AL fully supports the Qatari Initiative and peace talks in Doha. He opined that the AL is not a fair arbiter because "it is in the GOS camp." He told us that the AL is undertaking a humanitarian project to rebuild three

villages and provide a school, hospital, and a training center in each of the three Darfur states. However, Ali mentioned that the AL had given the money from the donor's conference to the GOS and Darfur had not received anything.

Doha Talks Not Comprehensive

¶ 14. (C) Minawi told us that the recent halt in fighting as a result of the goodwill agreement between JEM and the Government of Sudan (GOS) was good. However, he said the Doha talks were "only designed for the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and excluded all other players in Darfur." Minawi stated that the Doha talks don't offer the needed comprehensive solution. When pressed, he opined that a comprehensive solution would include all the major factions in Darfur and the regional countries such as Egypt, Libya, Eritrea, and Chad. Minawi stated that the Qataris don't know Darfur and are only "paying off the JEM" in order to boost their regional standing and influence. Minawi said that the JEM lack a popular base of support, and have chosen to use military force to advance their position in Sudan. He was critical of UN/AU mediator Bassole calling him a "simple guy" who "did not know what he was doing."

¶ 15. (C) Ali called the Doha talks a "disaster" and he said that the Qataris "don't understand Darfur." He said that the talks would not be successful because they could only result in a bilateral agreement between the JEM and the GOS. Ali stated that there was a possibility that any agreement could conflict with the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), signed

CAIRO 00000339 002 OF 003

by the GOS and Minawi in May 2006. He opined that the GOS wanted to cut a deal with the JEM in Doha to weaken Minawi and show that he has no presence in Darfur. The recent violence in Muhamjiriya, he said, was a GOS action to further divide the Darfuri factions before the Doha talks. Ali told us that successful peace talks would include the JEM, Abdel Wahid al-Nur, SLA Unity and the five factions united in Juba.

He said that Minawi would be involved in the peace negotiations because he has good relations with all factions and experience in the government in Khartoum. However, Minawi told us that he could bring some groups to the negotiating table, but could not bring Abdel Wahid al-Nur.

Doha Undermines the DPA

¶ 16. (C) Minawi told us that Qatar had excluded the DPA as the basis for the Doha talks. In his view, any deal between the GOS and HEM in Doha will undermine the DPA. Ali told us that the DPA did not succeed because the security and other articles were never implemented. He stated that the GOS initially wanted Minawi to take a position condemning the other factions in Darfur. However, Minawi rejected this approach and the Government labeled him as "uncooperative." Ali said that Minawi's current role in the Sudanese Government is to be the official representative of Darfur and handle security issues there. However, he confided that Minawi is uncertain what the GOS wants from him. Ali said that because the DPA has not been fully implemented, Minawi is not officially part of the Sudanese Government.

The ICC and President Bashir

¶ 17. (C) Minawi told us that the ICC was part of the legal solution to the Darfur crisis and it must go on in parallel with comprehensive peace negotiations. Dismissing Egyptian fears that arresting Bashir will lead to instability in Sudan, Minawi said that if Bashir is not President, "someone else will take his place." However, Minawi refused to

speculate on who that might be. He opined that the ICC will not affect the CPA because separation in 2011 is a surety. He stated that if an arrest warrant is issued for Bashir, the international community must insist that he be handed over to the court.

¶ 8. (C) Ali said that he believes the ICC will issue an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Bashir. He said that SLA/Minawi supports the ICC because it is one step to achieving justice in Darfur. Minawi's advisors are divided on the Sudanese Government's response to an ICC arrest warrant. There are those that believe the GOS would act in an "unwise" manner and oppose the ICC. This camp believes that the GOS will not comply with the warrant and will resort to playing the "Islamic card" against the West to defend Bashir from the ICC. He said that if this happens, the GOS will be paralyzed and unable to function internationally. He stated that President Bashir is different from former Humanitarian Minister Ahmed Haroun and failure to arrest him would amount to a defacto implementation of Article 16 of the Rome Statute. Others feel that the GOS could act in a "wise" manner and have Bashir step down as president and defend himself. In this manner the GOS would be de-linked from Bashir, and others would be able to work on resolving Sudanese issues.

Opening a Cairo Office

¶ 9. (C) Minawi's SLA faction plans to open an office in Cairo. He said that the GOE supports this action. Minawi told us that the office will coordinate with Egyptian officials on policies toward Darfur and Sudan. He also stated that the office will provide support for the local Darfur refugee community. Ali told us that the office will facilitate a dialogue between Minawi's SLA faction and the GOE and AL. Ali also said that the office would work with the Darfuri refugee community in Cairo to find humanitarian assistance that was not being provided by international agencies.

The Future of Darfur

CAIRO 00000339 003 OF 003

¶ 10. (C) Minawi told us that the situation in Darfur is still violent. There are some areas of stability, but most are bad. Minawi stated that UNAMID has not helped because they don't leave their areas. "They have big guns and helicopters, but they are not doing anything." Minawi stated that unlike South Sudan, no one in Darfur is calling for independence. He said that Darfur will remain part of Sudan, the only question is what form unity will take. Minawi said that the people of Darfur would decide on the type of union. However, he told us that this cannot happen until the IDP return to their homes and the more than 200,000 refugees in Chad return to Darfur.

¶ 11. (C) Comment: Both Minawi and Egyptian officials are looking for alternatives to the Qatari Initiative, which could lead to a "marriage of convenience" between the parties. Minawi was originally invited to Cairo by the AL SYG because Minawi felt left out of the Qatari process. The failure to meet with SYG Moussa reflects Minawi's frustration with AL support for a process that he feels will undermine his position, and give the JEM the upper hand in Sudan, Darfur and with the Zaghawa. Minawi was reluctant to provide details on his meetings with Egyptian officials. He did not appear to have a vision for the future of Darfur, and was vague about the future of peace talks, his role in Sudan, the future of the GOS, and even the opening of a SLA office in Cairo.

¶ 12. (U) Minimize considered.

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